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ELI WASHINGTON CARUTHERS

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ELI WASHINGTON CARUTHERS

George Troxler
April 1965



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INTRODUCTION

The attitude of the Southern ministry in the years prior to the Civil War would provide an interesting object of study in attempting to understand the clergy's role in matters of social reform, a study which might be of some value to their heirs in the ministry.

The minister dealt with in this paper was by no means typical; yet his life, filled with contrasts, provides an interesting window into the times and community of which he was a part. Eli Caruthers left a manuscript which was one of the most thorough condemnations of slavery written by a southerner, yet he never chose to assume a moral leadership in regard to the abolition of the system. His views on the subject were known by his contemporaries, yet he remained an active and popular minister until the outbreak of the war. Caruthers is remembered as an educator, as a historian, and as a capable and dynamic minister. Silent on the matter of slavery, he found no lack of tasks to which he could apply his time and energies. His life and accomplishments are certainly worthy of record in themselves.

Eli Caruthers was born in Rowan County on October 23, 1793. His father was an elder in the Thyatira Presbyterian Church prior to the founding of the Back Creek Church near his farm west of Salisbury. Eli, the second of seven children, received his first education from a tutor employed on his father's farm before entering a school taught by the Reverend Joseph Kirkpatrick, the first pastor of the Back Creek Church. In 1812, he entered Hampden-Sydney College where he paid his way by tutoring a few students.² His education was interrupted by a short service in the War of 1812, and he completed his Bachelor's degree at New Jersey College in 1817.³ Caruthers then entered Princeton Seminary and was licensed by the New Brunswick Presbytery in April of 1820.

In the Spring of 1821, while traveling through Guilford County he met the aging divine, David Caldwell, and was invited to preach to Caldwell's congregation the following Sunday. Caldwell's two churches, Buffalo and Alamance, together with Bethel Church, issued the young minister a call and he was ordained and installed by Orange Presbytery in November of 1821.⁴ After a year he gave up the pastorate at Bethel in order to devote his time to the two larger congregations. The tie with Buffalo was broken in the Spring of 1846, and he resigned his duties at Alamance in 1861, after a pastorate of forty years.

¹Charles Raven Brockman, Adams-Caruthers-Clancy-Neely and Townsend Descendants Composing the Adams Legerton Wakefield Brockmann and Other Twentieth Century Families of the Carolinas (Charlotte: privately printed, 1950), p.67. (Hereinafter cited as Brockman, Twentieth Century Families of the Carolinas.)

²Joseph M. Wilson, The Presbyterian Historical Almanac and Annual Remembrance of the Church for 1866, 10 volumes. (Philadelphia: Joseph M. Wilson, 1858/59-1868), VIII, 348.

³Charles Lee Raper, The Church and Private Schools of North Carolina A Historical Study (Greensboro: Jos. J. Stone Book and Job Printers, 1898), p.107.

⁴Wilson, The Presbyterian Historical Almanac and Annual Remembrance of the Church for 1866, VIII, 348.

Like his predecessor, Caruthers was a strong advocate of the camp meeting and the need of revival. After a revival at Alamance in 1829, some forty members were added to the Church,⁵ and in 1833, Buffalo and Alamance, together with the other two Guilford churches, purchased a camping ground and erected a large "tent".⁶ The protracted camp meeting was continued at Alamance until the War and another successful revival took place at the Alamance camp meeting in 1858.

Eli Caruthers was well known as an able and forceful minister, and over two hundred of his sermons in the manuscript collection at Duke University attest to his clear didactical style. Liberal in his attitude toward other sects, he exchanged pulpits with Baptists, Methodists, Quakers, and other denominations.

When Caruthers came to Guilford County, he settled in the small town of Greensboro. In the Spring of 1838⁷ his sister Catherine and her husband, G.C. Townsend, came to the town and opened an inn where Caruthers lived until 1846.⁸

His face partially covered by beard, Caruthers had light hair before it was whitened by age. One source notes that he was "somewhat negligent of his personal appearance and lacking in grace and refined manners."⁹ This, and his failure to remove his "stovepipe" hat as often as politeness required¹⁰ are most often attributed to "the fact that he had deprived himself of that which is the best earthly corrective of these evils, a refined and intelligent wife".¹¹

⁵ C.H. Wiley, Alamance Church A Historical Address Delivered at the Dedication of its Fourth House of Worship (Raleigh: Edwards, Broughton & Co., 1880), p.25. (Hereinafter cited as Wiley, Alamance Church.)

⁶ S.M. Rankin, History of Buffalo Presbyterian Church and Her People (Greensboro: J.J. Stone & Co., 1934/), p.112.

⁷ Greensborough Patriot, May 4, 1838.

⁸ Brockman, Twentieth Century Families of the Carolinas, p.64.

⁹ J.C. Wharton, "Rev. E.W. Caruthers," The College Message, VIII (March 1898), 306.

¹⁰ David Schenck, A Short Sketch of the Life of Eli W. Caruthers (Greensboro, Reece & Elam, 1901), p.3

¹¹ J.C. Wharton, "Rev. E.W. Caruthers", p.306

THE COMMUNITY LEADER

Eli Caruthers was an active participant in community activities. He was apparently a member of the Greensborough Bible Society for it is recorded in the Patriot that he preached at the meeting on April 10, 1828,¹ and that he was one of the managers of the society in 1836.² He took an active interest in the temperance movement, and reports of the meetings of the Temperance Society are carefully entered in the "Minutes of Session" at Alamance.³

In 1827 Caruthers was secretary of the Guilford Sunday School Union,⁴ a position he held for a number of years. The purpose of the Union was to provide an inter-denominational exchange for the teachers and students as well as to secure books and literature from a National Union. He was also a member of the executive committee of the Guilford Tract Society, organized in 1831 to distribute religious tracts.⁵

The educational life of the community in which Eli Caruthers settled had been dominated by his predecessors in the Presbyterian ministry. The little we know of the first school in the present city limits of Greensboro is preserved in the writings of Caruthers. In his life of David Caldwell we catch a glimpse of the "Log College" opened in 1767, which earned a reputation throughout the South.

When Caruthers settled in Greensboro he took an interest in the Greensborough Academy which had been under the direction of the Reverend William Paisley, a Presbyterian minister. The Reverend S. M. Rankin, writing in 1934, stated that Caruthers taught in this academy.⁶ Although newspaper advertisements in Greensboro and Raleigh papers gave the names of several men as "principals", Caruthers' name can not be found listed in any primary source. Nevertheless, it is easy to assume that the young Princeton graduate's talents were employed at the school.

In December of 1826 an advertisement appeared in the Greensborough Patriot signed by Eli Caruthers as Secretary of the Academy. According to this account the course of study at the Academy was designed to prepare students for the

¹The Patriot and Greensborough Palladium, December 22, 1827.

²Greensborough Patriot, July 20, 1836.

³Alamance Church, Guilford County, North Carolina, "Minutes of Session", Book 1, July 17, 1831, and passim.

⁴The Patriot and Greensborough Palladium, March 21, 1827.

⁵Greensborough Patriot, November 30, 1831.

⁶Rankin, History of Buffalo Presbyterian Church and Her People, p.115.

Freshman and Sophomore classes at the University. The two five-month sessions began in January and July with a public examination at the close of each session. Board for each session which included "room, firewood, washing, and candies" was thirty-five dollars. Tuition for English Grammar, Arithmetic, Geography, and the Greek and Latin Languages was ten dollars and fifty cents. An additional four dollars and fifty cents was charged for Algebra and Geometry.⁷

In 1833 plans for two additional educational institutions were to involve the time and efforts of Caruthers. Had plans materialized the Greensborough Academy and Manual Labor School would have combined schooling with farming and the mechanical arts, a most progressive idea for the year 1833. Caruthers, the Reverend William Paisley, John M. Morehead, and John M. Dick, a member of Caruthers' congregation, were on the board of directors of the proposed school.⁸

In the same year the Orange Presbytery made plans to establish a classical school in Greensboro to be known as Caldwell Institute. Caruthers was secretary of the committee which began collecting money for the school. In 1836 instruction began under Alexander Wilson, the principal. Progress must have been impeded by lack of finances as the building could not be erected until 1837-1838.⁹ Caruthers, while attending the 1836 General Assembly in Philadelphia, wrote to Wilson telling of his problems in collecting subscriptions. Abolition sentiment, the pressing needs of western missions, and the similar activities of agents from other southern literary institutions had made collections difficult. The list of Guilford contributions included subscriptions for lumber, sawing, and "hawling", indicating that the construction must have been a community project.¹⁰ The Institute's staff consisted of the Reverend Alexander Wilson and two assistants who taught the following courses:

- 1st. A complete course of English Instruction
- 2nd. The Greek and Roman Classics, and Antiquities, Ancient Geography, Mythology and History.
- 3rd. The Mathematical and Natural Sciences.¹¹

In the nine years that the Institute was in Greensboro enrollment ranged from seventy-five to one-hundred eight. Among the students who prepared for their entrance at the University were such men as Calvin H. Wiley, later the first Superintendent of Public Instruction. After hearing reports of the unhealthiness of the town, in May of 1845, the Presbytery voted to move the Institute to Hillsboro.¹² Local citizens protested the move and at a town meeting

⁷Greensborough Patriot, December 13, 1826.

⁸Ethel Stephens Arnett, Greensboro North Carolina The County Seat of Guilford (Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press), p.74.

⁹J.C. Wharton, "Reminiscences of Greensboro from 1830 to 1850" Greensboro Patriot, December 16, 1896.

¹⁰E.W. Caruthers to Alexander Wilson, June 11, 1836, in Alexander Wilson Papers, the Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.

¹¹Greensborough Patriot, May 4, 1838.

¹²Greensborough Patriot, May 31, 1845.

a memorial was drawn up to be sent to the trustees.¹³ Several of the town's physicians made a five-year tabulation of the illness and disease in the community to demonstrate the healthful condition of the community, and the local newspaper was quick to point to the flourishing condition of the Female College and the Edgeworth School for Young Ladies as proof of the healthful conditions and academic atmosphere of the town.¹⁴

The efforts of the citizens were to no avail and Greensboro was left without an academy for boys. Plans were quickly made to supplant the loss of the Institute, and in the same month that Alexander Wilson moved to Hillsboro the trustees of the new Greensborough High School announced the opening of a school "designed to be inferior only to the University".¹⁵ The High School began operations in the building formally occupied by the Caldwell Institute with between forty-five and fifty students.¹⁶

Teaching Greek, Eli Caruthers was one of the four professors and in December he was appointed President of the school.¹⁷ The duties of teacher and minister coincided well, as religious instruction was considered a necessary part of one's education. For example, in the Greensborough High School where two of the professors were Presbyterian ministers, parents of prospective students were assured that the scholars were required to attend daily morning and evening prayers. On Sunday they were to be present at morning Church services and Bible recitations in the afternoon.¹⁸ The course of study at the school was very similar to that at the Caldwell Institute and the old Greensborough Academy. Emphasis was placed on the Classics which would prepare students for the Sophomore and Junior classes at the University.

For nearly two years Caruthers served the school as President while continuing his duties as pastor. In the Spring of 1846, he gave up his pastorate at Buffalo, and in September of the same year the congregation at Alamance voted for him "to continue as pastor provided he discontinue his work at the High School in Greensboro and locate in the Buffalo or Alamance community".¹⁹ Caruthers chose to remain as pastor of the church, although in the mid-nineteenth century a minister's pay was irregular and the demand for qualified teachers and preparatory schools represented not only a source of income but a civic responsibility to the educated ministry.

After the close of the 1846 session, in keeping with the wishes of his church, Caruthers moved to the home of Joseph W. Gilmer about nine miles southeast of Greensboro. Apparently the congregation had no objections when he opened a select Classical School in the Gilmer home in June of the following year. Extensive knowledge of this school is lacking, the only information being from contemporary newspaper accounts. There is no record of the number of students at the school, but the fact that an assistant was employed and that a

¹³ Greensborough Patriot, May 24, 1845.

¹⁴ Greensborough Patriot, May 10, 1845.

¹⁵ Greensborough Patriot, May 24, 1845.

¹⁶ Greensborough Patriot, May 31, 1845.

¹⁷ Greensborough Patriot, December 6, 1845.

¹⁸ Greensborough Patriot, December 20, 1845.

¹⁹ Alamance Church, Guilford County, North Carolina, "Congregational Minutes", Book 1, September 19, 1846, p.3

"considerable number"²⁰ of the graduates attended the University would indicate that it grew to sizable proportions. Most of the students lived at home although board could be had at Christian homes, "in a neighborhood not surpassed for sobriety and good morals".²¹

Thus, Caruthers was for a few years able to continue preparing members of both sexes for teaching in the district schools and "for the Sophomore Class in college".²² Perhaps advancing age and ministerial duties imposed too much of a burden on Caruthers for him to continue as teacher, and in 1850 what was by that time known as the Alamance Classical School was placed under the care of Caruthers' assistant, Samuel H. Wiley.²³

20 Brockman, Twentieth Century Families of the Carolinas, p.69

21 Greensborough Patriot, November 20, 1847.

22 Ibid.

23 Greensborough Patriot, June 8, 1850.

THE HISTORIAN

It would seem that the activities of the ministry combined with the attention Caruthers gave to the educational affairs of his community would have left little time for writing. Ironically, it is for his contribution as a recorder of Revolutionary history that he is remembered. Caruthers' background was an ideal preparation for such a task. His Presbyterian ancestors in Rowan County and the congregations of his predecessor in Guilford had been active participants in the struggle for independence. At the time of his writing the greater part of the Revolutionary history of the State was unrecorded; historians owe a great debt of gratitude to a few early chroniclers of local history like Caruthers who provided a link between the participants and the later historians.

It was perhaps his recognition of such a need that motivated Caruthers to write his first book, A Sketch of the Life and Character of the Reverend David Caldwell, D.D. Caldwell's most active years were passed when the British burned his library in 1781. Only two of his sermons are preserved,¹ and his correspondence and records of many of his activities have been lost. Caruthers' book, published twenty years after Caldwell's death, remains the primary source of information about a man whose contribution to the State's history would be difficult to evaluate. Caldwell made significant contributions in the fields of religion, education, and government. In 1765 as a young itinerant missionary he had traveled from his Pennsylvania home to the Scotch-Irish settlements in North Carolina. The following year he returned to the Buffalo and Alamance settlements where he remained until his retirement in 1820, a ministry of fifty-four years. Soon after his arrival he opened a "Log College" at his home; it was the first educational institute in Guilford County and won a reputation throughout the South. From this school came five future governors and over fifty ministers.² Caldwell was appointed to the Board of Directors of the State University after he refused to accept the position of president.

Although he had been sympathetic with the Regulator movement, Caldwell attempted mediation with Governor Tryon before the Battle of Alamance.³ In the Revolution Caldwell was an ardent Whig who encouraged his congregations to fight for the cause of independence. An active member of the Halifax Convention which framed the Revolutionary Constitution and a self trained doctor who gained a reputation as a skilled physician, Caldwell made a lasting contribution to his State and Community.

The book is less a biography than an account of the founding of Presbyterianism in Piedmont North Carolina. Included, also, are numerous incidents of Revolutionary history which were of special interest to the author. Caruthers' interest in the Revolution grew and he continued to collect information and various personal accounts of the war as he traveled over the State. Confined by poor health in the winter of 1851-1852,⁴ he began to

¹These two sermons are found in the printed appendix of Caruthers' biography, A Sketch of the Life and Character of the Reverend David Caldwell, D.D.

²Reverend E.W. Caruthers, A Sketch of the Life and Character of the Rev. David Caldwell, D.D. (Greensborough: Swaim and Sherwood, 1842), p.31.

³Ibid.

⁴Rev.E.W. Caruthers, Revolutionary Incidents and Sketches of Character Chiefly in the "Old North State" (Philadelphia: Hayes & Zell, 1854), p.vii.

organize and prepare for publication what were to become two volumes: Revolutionary Incidents and Sketches of Character Chiefly in The "Old North State", published in 1854 and Interesting Revolutionary Incidents and Sketches of Character Chiefly in the "Old North State" Second Series published in 1856. Among several purposes for writing this history was Caruthers' desire to record numerous accounts which might otherwise have been lost before they could have been recorded in a more general history. The value of his writing is attested to by the numerous books of a later date which rely on Caruthers' two volumes and Wheeler's history published in the same decade. With a regard for the author's views on slavery and the approaching sectional conflict it is interesting to read Caruthers' comment in the preface to the first volume:

It seemed desirable that we should know the full cost of our liberties; and especially that the horrors attending a "civil" war should be held up as a warning to guard against whatever might have any tendency to produce a similar state of things again.⁵

True to his purpose, both volumes were accounts of what was a "civil" war in North Carolina. The first volume was a study of the Tories in North Carolina, telling something of their background. Caruthers recounted much about the Scot Highlanders, among whose descendants he had numerous contacts as a fellow Presbyterian, and about Colonel David Fanning, the Tory Partisan and his "Miscellaneous deeds of Atrocity".⁶ Both volumes contain numerous accounts obtained from veterans and their descendants. In the second book Caruthers related William Paisley's experience in the first line at the Battle of Guilford Courthouse. Paisley, failing to make his retreat, found the British so near that he was forced to "play possum" while they passed over his body. After the scene of battle passed Paisley quickly got up and shot a "cowardly" British soldier who thought himself hidden behind a tree.⁷ Caruthers displayed tolerance as he described a group of unfortunate Quakers at Cane Creek who mistook Colonel Washington's Cavalry for British troopers and were forced to part with both their horses and clothing. The valor of the enemy could be seen as the death of the British officer Colonel Webster was portrayed. Caruthers' attitude toward the conflict was clearly seen as he described Greene's unsuccessful attempt to pursue Cornwallis after the Battle of Guilford Courthouse". . . the All-wise Being, whose kingdom rules over all, had an ulterior objective in view and it was all for the best".⁸

A large part of the "Second Series" was a defense of the North Carolina militia in the war and in particular at Guilford Courthouse. In preparation for the battle, the Carolina militia were placed on the front line; they were ordered to fire and retreat behind the Virginia militia in the second line. In placing his Continentals on the third line and in his use of untrained militia Greene followed the standard practice of the day. Participants and historians have had varied opinions as to the conduct of the militia and the orders they were given. Colonel Harry Lee in his memoirs and a number of writers relying on the report of the Adjutant-General contended that the militia ran before firing the two shots required of them. Caruthers was the first writer to make a proper defense of the militia; he relied upon accounts

⁵Ibid., p.xi

⁶Ibid., p.233

⁷Rev.E.W. Caruthers, D.D., Interesting Revolutionary Incidents and Sketches of Character Chiefly in the "Old North State" Second Series (Philadelphia: Hayes & Zell, 1856), pp.161-162. (Hereinafter cited as Caruthers, Second Series).

⁸Ibid., p.184.

from both North Carolina and Virginia militia whom he had visited or who were members of his congregations.⁹ He contended that the large number of North Carolina militia listed as missing in the Adjutant-General's report had volunteered for the occasion and intended to stay no longer than the battle.¹⁰ The fact that one regiment "failed to report" after the battle can be attributed to the fact that Colonel Forbis, a member of the Alamance congregation, lay dying on the field of battle. Taking into account those members of the drafted militia "who had neither property, principle, nor character to loose,"¹¹ Caruthers contended that the Carolina militia fired a deadly first round and that a large number reloaded in time to fire again which was all that was required of them.

The biography of Caldwell and the two Revolutionary sketchbooks are the only books published by Caruthers, although he left two other manuscripts. One, "American Slavery and the Immediate Duty of Southern Slaveholders" will be discussed in the following chapter. The second, "Richard Hugg King and His Times", a much shorter manuscript written in 1862, by both its style and informative nature, would have merited publication in less troubled times.

Richard Hugg King, born in Rowan county in 1767, was educated at the College of New Jersey and spent several years in Camden, South Carolina before returning to North Carolina. After studying law he joined the Federalist party and was in 1796, appointed Excise Officer for the western part of North Carolina. The appointment was a political grave and with the decline of the party he returned to his farm. After McGrady's revival swept the State in 1801-1802, King gave up his farm to become an evangelist. Refused a license by the Presbyterian Church of which he was a member, he joined the Methodists and soon established a reputation as a sincere and forceful minister of the Gospel. After spending twelve or thirteen years with the Methodists, King was accepted by the Presbyterians and ordained in 1816.¹² The next year he moved to eastern Tennessee where he continued his ministry until his death in 1825.

The manuscript has added value because of Caruthers' vivid descriptions of the revival in North Carolina and his defense and interpretations of the movement's psychological appeal. Included is a description of the revival at Alamance in November of 1801, which lasted four or five days. The eight or nine ministers preached to an estimated crowd of five thousand who had camped on the grounds.¹³ Although a firm believer in the need of revival, Caruthers condemned the jerking, dancing, and barking which grew out of the movement as the "production of human depravity acted upon by a very partial influence of religion".¹⁴

⁹An expanded study and defense of the North Carolina militia was made in 1889 by David Schenck: North Carolina 1780-'81. Schenck relied upon a number of accounts written by British and American officers as well as Caruthers' work.

¹⁰Caruthers, Second Series, p.152.

¹¹Ibid., p.147

¹²Rev. Eli W. Caruthers, "Richard Hugg King and His Times Reminiscences of Rev. Eli Caruthers of Orange Presbytery N.C." typed copy of manuscript in Richard Hugg King Collection, North Carolina State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina. p.72

¹³Ibid., pp.28-29

¹⁴ibid., p.39.

THE TASK OF LEADERSHIP

One wonders that Caruthers, as firmly opposed to slavery as he was, did not make a more active appeal for its abolition; it is even more surprising that one whose antislavery views were well known could remain a respected member of his community. Guilford County was a part of the fringe area which surrounded the plantation belt. Partially dependent upon the economy of the coastal region, a similar attitude prevailed toward slavery, although there were no large slave-holders in the county.

At Alamance Negroes attended the church services and were seated in a segregated section of the sanctuary. By 1854, thirty-six slaves and three free Negroes had been admitted into membership.¹ Calvin Wiley who grew up in the Church wrote that it was the practice of the members to teach their slaves to read and to furnish them with Bibles.² Since the colonial period Presbyterian ministers had provided religious instruction for Negroes who were frequently given membership in the same churches as their owners. As late as 1858, the Synod of North Carolina in its annual report stated that:

It is worthy of special mention that increasing attention is given to the religious interests of the colored population. This is apparent in the special provision for their accommodation in the erection of places of public worship, in the frequency of preaching expressly to them, and in the oral instruction given them in the families.³

Among Caruthers' sermons is one dated December 25, 1850, on which he has noted, "To the Colored People". Using a text from Paul⁴ he described Paul's conversion and appointment to carry the gospel to the Gentiles. "We are all Gentiles, for all except the Jews were so designated and our ancestor were pagans, idolators. . ."⁵ The sermon was concluded with a very emotional call for repentance. Rather than take the "obedient servant" approach Caruthers chose to describe the common "Gentile" ancestry of the two races.

Between 1840 and 1850, Caruthers wrote a book which was never published entitled "American Slavery and the Immediate Duty of Southern Slaveholders". The complete manuscript included several revisions and a second preface written in 1865. In this second preface he indicated that the paper might still be published because the public would be in a better mood to accept an anti-slavery argument after the war, and that the authority of the Bible would justify the events of the conflict. His original purpose was to compare the institution of slavery with the teachings of the Bible and natural philosophy. He went on to assert that Negroes could never fully enter the Christian faith as slaves.

Caruthers began the book with a text from Exodus: "Let my people go

¹Alamance Church, Guilford County, North Carolina, "Minutes of Session", Book 1, 1830-1854.

²Wiley, Alamance Church, p.31

³Minutes of the Forty-Fifth Sessions of the Synod of North Carolina (Fayetteville: The Presbyterian Job Office, 1858), p.18

⁴Eph.3:8.

⁵Eli W. Caruthers "To the Colored People" in Eli Washington Caruthers Collection, Duke University

that they may serve me".⁶ The Lord's claim on the Negro race is founded on the covenant of redemption⁷ and neither the condition of Africans in their own land,⁸ nor the alleged antiquity of the institution,⁹ nor the opinions of learned and good men¹⁰ could justify the institution. To the author, slavery in Egypt, Babylon, Greece, and Rome presented a vivid contrast to the harshness of the institution as it prevailed in the South.

There is a difference between servitude and slavery, and Caruthers advanced the thesis that it was servitude rather than slavery which existed in the patriarchal age, under the Mosaic dispensation and under Christian Law. The institution of slavery even if it did exist in Old Testament times was much milder than in America; inheritance, marriage, and education were all provided for by the Law. In the New Testament passages which were often cited to defend slavery the Greek word "doulos" has been translated "slave" instead of servant.¹¹

In America "slavery originated in avarice, falsehood and cruelty".¹² Caruthers maintained that the demand, "Let my people go" was being enforced by Providence. This could be seen by comparing advances in the arts and sciences in North and South.¹³

According to the slave codes, slaves were not able to make the full consecration that the Bible requires, nor did they have the equality of rights and privileges which is in the New Testament accorded to all believers.¹⁴

⁶Exodus 10:8.

⁷Eli Washington Caruthers, "American Slavery and the Immediate Duty of Southern Slaveholders" in Eli Washington Caruthers Collection, Duke University. p.61

⁸Ibid. p.13.

⁹Ibid. p.29

¹⁰Ibid., p.125.

¹¹Ibid. p.104.

¹²Ibid. p.129.

¹³Ibid., p.157.

¹⁴Ibid., p.13.

Caruthers outlined the process of abolition in the northern states and indicated the influence that the abolishment of slavery in the southern states would have upon the African slave trade and upon slavery in other parts of the world.¹⁵ He contended that if the South would begin a program of voluntary emancipation "a great change of feeling toward them (the Negro race) would take place and everything would become easy".¹⁶ The Negro race with its milder virtues and peaceful disposition could rise from its degraded position and become prosperous. Caruthers was vague in his conclusion as to the future of the Negro in the South. He appeared to see a Christian African Nation which "shall stretch forth her hands unto God".¹⁷

John Spencer Bassett in his book, Anti-Slavery Leaders of North Carolina said that it was perhaps while Caruthers was at Princeton Seminary where he met G.M. Stroud, author of The Laws Relating to Slavery, that his ideas were formulated. Although many of Caruthers' facts were taken from Stroud, Bassett wrote, "It is doubtful if a stronger or clearer anti-slavery argument was ever made on this continent".¹⁸

Though Caruthers never published his book nor spoke out publicly against slavery, we should not assume that his views did not have some influence. His harshest criticisms of the system were reserved for the laws forbidding slaves to be taught to read and write. These laws violated one of the slaveholder's strongest defenses--that God permitted the Negroes to be brought to America so that they might be converted and prepared to carry the gospel back to Africa. Calvin H. Wiley, who was born at Alamance in 1819 and later became an elder and minister in the Presbyterian Church had a strikingly similar attitude. He stated publicly during the war that, "God had visited the war on the South because it had failed to educate the Negroes to read the gospel and thus to have an opportunity to save their souls".¹⁹

Greensboro in the three decades prior to the Civil War was a small, intellectually-attuned community, and surely there must have been some interchange of ideas among the Gorrells, Moreheads, Logans, Caldwells, and Swaims who lived there. Caruthers' attitude toward slavery was well known, and it would not seem unreasonable that Congressman Gilmer, Governor Morehead, and editor Swain found time to ask their friend and neighbor for an explanation of his views.

The ethical debate over the justice of slavery rose to a climax with the outbreak of the Civil War. Caruthers had no sympathy for the Southern cause which he felt was both unjust and without hope of success.

Alamance Church contributed heavily to the war effort, and twelve of the

¹⁵ Ibid., p.393

¹⁶ Ibid., p.401

¹⁷ Ibid., p.402

¹⁸ John Spencer Bassett, "Anti-Slavery Leaders of North Carolina", Series XVI No. 6 of Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science, ed. Herbert B. Adams. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press), June, 1898, p.60.

¹⁹ Paul M. Ford: "Calvin H. Wiley and the Common Schools of North Carolina, 1850-1869" (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Harvard University, 1960), p.viii.

twenty-five members who enlisted died in the service of their state.²⁰ On April 18, 1861, the first company of Confederate troops organized in Guilford County left Greensboro.²¹ Strong tradition in the church tells of Caruthers praying a short time later that the young men who had gone into the service "might be blessed of the Lord and returned to safety, though engaged in a lost cause".²² A church historian writing in 1913 said that a congregational meeting was held and his resignation requested,²³ although there is no record in the "Minutes of the Congregational Meetings" of any such action. The letter of resignation from Caruthers to Calvin H. Wiley, then Clerk of Session gave failing health as the reason for his requesting the congregation to unite with him in dissolving the pastoral ties.²⁴

The congregation upon accepting the resignation in "kindness and sorrow" passed a resolution expressing their gratitude for Caruthers' years of faithful service and tendering to him their "Christian sympathies, and praying that he may have the reward of those whose labor is not in vain in the Lord".²⁵ The fact that the congregation wished for the resolution to be printed in the local paper and that Caruthers was on at least one occasion during the war asked to conduct a funeral service at the Church would indicate that they held him in high regard.

Caruthers spent the last years of his life at the home of Fountain B. McLean near Greensboro. Here he found time to write the sketch of Richard Hugg King in 1862 and to prepare a second preface for his manuscript on slavery before his death in November of 1865. A glimpse of his life during the war was given by a contemporary, the Reverend J. Henry Smith of Greensboro writing in 1866.

During the war he was a sort of wanderer. How he lived through the terribly hard times I do not know. I never heard him preach or pray. For the past five years he was not at Presbytery or Synod, and was, I am told, always irregular in his attendance at the Church judicatories. . . He had no sympathy I believe at all, with the Southern Confederacy or with anything connected with it, or springing from it. He was certainly spoken of during the war as a "tory", but I think all believed him a conscientious Christian.²⁶

To praise Eli Caruthers' ability at maintaining a respected position in his community despite his conscientious objection to the system of slavery, or to criticize him for not being more vocal is neither the purpose nor privilege of this paper. The wisdom of his course and the degree to which he was able to influence opinion in his community are matters of historical speculation

²⁰ Wiley, Alamance Church, p.44

²¹ James W. Albright, Greensboro 1808-1904, Facts, Figures, Traditions, and Reminiscences (Greensboro: Jos. J. Stone & Company, 1904), p.120.

²² Annie V. Scott, "A History of Alamance Church", State Normal Magazine November, 1913), 93.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Eli Caruthers to Calvin H. Wiley, July 5, 1861, in Alamance Church "Congregational Minutes", Book 1, p.16.

²⁵ Greensborough Patriot, July 18, 1861.

²⁶ Joseph M. Wilson, The Presbyterian Historical Almanac and Annual Remembrance of the Church for 1866, VIII, 350.

rather than established fact. Any judgment of his actions must take into account that to his own mind, he was first and always a minister. Important as were his contributions in other fields, it would be an injustice to forget that he considered the ministry as that one duty to which all other interests must be subordinated. In that task to which he ascribed first importance he was a success. Only the chaos of a civil war could separate the pastor from his people who even then held him in deepest respect.

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